

expectations. The man will wish to summon the world to throw aside its tame accustomed pursuits, and adopt at once more magnificent views and objects, and will be indignant at mankind that they cannot or will not be sublime. Impatient of little mean and slow processes, he will wish for violent transitions and entirely new institutions. He will perhaps determine to set men the example of performing something great, in some ill-judged sanguine project in which he will fail; and, after being ridiculed by society, both for the scheme and its catastrophe, may probably abandon all the activities of life, and become a misanthrope the rest of his days. At any rate, he will disdain all labour to perform well in little or moderate things, when fate has frowned on his higher ambition.

LETTER III.

ONE of the most obvious distinctions of the works of romance is, an utter violation of all the relations between ends and means. Sometimes such ends are proposed as seem quite dissevered from means, inasmuch as there are scarcely any supposable means on earth to accomplish them : but no matter; if we cannot ride we must swim, if we cannot swim we must fly ; the object is effected by a mere poetical omnipotence that wills it. And very often practicable objects are attained by means the most fantastic, improbable, or inadequate ; so that there is scarcely any resemblance between the method in which they are accomplished by the dexterity of fiction, and that which we are condemned to follow if we will attempt the same things in the actual economy of the world. Now, when you see this absurdity of imagination prevailing in the calculations of real life, you may justly apply the epithet—romantic.

Indeed a strong and habitually indulged imagination may be absorbed in the end, if it be not a concern of absolute immediate urgency, as for a while quite to forget the process of attainment. That power has incantations to dissolve the rigid laws of time and distance, and place a man in something so like the presence of his object, as to create the temporary hallucination of an ideal possession ; and it is hard, when occupying the verge of Paradise, to be flung